



SPECIAL ARTICLE

April 20, 2010

The Mississippi State Department of Health Needs You

National Volunteer Week is April 18-24, 2010, and is dedicated to inspiring, recognizing and encouraging people to seek out imaginative ways to engage in their communities. Working together, challenges can be met and goals accomplished.

Recent disasters have shown that emergencies need management by local people. In the event of a large-scale public health emergency, health and medical systems will be overwhelmed with individuals seeking treatment. Meeting this demand will be critical. Volunteers may be the only viable resource available in an emergency.

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) Volunteers in Preparedness Registry (VIPR) is a program of pre-credentialed healthcare volunteers and pre-registered non-medical volunteers who are trained to provide a coordinated response to emergencies to support the established public health and emergency response system.

More than 80 percent of the volunteer roles are non-medical, such as greeters, translators, runners, floaters, data entry, clergy, administrators, ham radio operators, bus drivers, communications specialists, inventory control and IT personnel.

VIPR was recently activated during Hurricane Gustav and volunteers successfully performed duties in the Emergency Operations Center. Also, ham radio operators provided communication bulletins for emergency information and shelter workers assisted those who had been evacuated.

VIPR continually recruits volunteers, 18 years of age and older, who would like to provide assistance in times of crisis. Hundreds of doctors and nurses have already registered. At this time, VIPR is looking for non-medical volunteers such as office workers, data entry, electrical, carpentry, and shelter workers. If you are at least 18 and want to make a difference in your community, consider becoming a VIPR volunteer.

To register as a volunteer, go to <http://volunteer.msdh.state.ms.us> and sign up. It's that easy! You specify what location you can serve, in what capacity and length of service.